

THE DINNER SEASON IS NOW OPEN AT THE CAPITAL

Washington's Banquets a Factor in History Making—Taft Has Introduced Innovations—Lavish Hosts and Some of Their Wondrous Repasts—Many Are Arabian Nights Visions

from the chandeliers to the side walls and over the mantels glistered other colored lights, while fiery anchors and stars shone above the windows and doorways. In this fairyland the president and his royal guest sat down at a great crescent-shaped table curving about a great pyramid of rare plants. The ice cream was eaten from candy sea shells, upon which were emblazoned the American and German coat-of-arms, and the punch was served in tiny boats, each flying the flag of the Kaiser's yacht, whose launching in this country was the occasion of the prince's visit.

President McKinley also dined a royal personage, since he became a king—Albert of Belgium—and although this banquet had to be held in the corridor of the White House because the state dining room would not hold the seventy-two guests, the state apartments of the mansion were converted into a fairyland of varicolored flowers and twinkling lights.

These dinners were held by the last Democratic premier, the dress suit was never seen in Washington on Sabbath evenings.

THE most lavish dinner-giver of these days was Calvin Brier, the millionaire Democratic senator from Ohio, who bought the historic mansion of W. W. Corcoran. He gave about three dinner parties a week during each season, and paid Nordica, Melba, Jean de Reszke, Ysabel, the Kaezel quartette and other famous stars several thousand dollars apiece to sing to his after-dinner guests.

One of these dinners given in Corcoran house is said to have cost him \$12,000, which would have paid his senatorial salary for two years and five months. The Duke of Veragua, descendant of Christopher Columbus, was one of his dinner guests. Sometimes,

the most successful dinner host and the only chief executive since the days of Andrew Jackson who could make his state banquet guests feel as much at ease as though they had their knees under their own mahogany. Despite the fact that "water flowed like champagne" at his totalabstinence banquets, Hayes made the reputation of being the most lavish dinner host who up to his time had occupied the White House.

The most notable dinners given at the national capital in antebellum days were the two state banquets which President Buchanan gave to his house guests, the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, in 1859, and the notable banquet given to Lafayette during Monroe's administration. The diplomatic corps was bidden to one of the dinners given to the prince and the cabinet to the other. The Lafayette dinner, which was followed by a grand ball, was attended by two former presidents, Madison and Jefferson.

A WHITE HOUSE DINNER. President Taft and Guests in State Dining Room.

BY JOHN ELFRETH WATKINS.

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WASHINGTON, D. C., Nov. 18.—Now begins the dinner-giving season of the national capital, across whose festive mahogany much history is made each winter month.

The effect of a good dinner upon the fate of nations and parties has been felt since Cleopatra banqueted Antony, and it is at the capitals of nations that it attains its chief import. In Washington it is regarded as a governmental function, and thus we see the representatives of the people of the sovereign states and of the foreign powers meet the president more intimately than elsewhere.

President Taft has extended this form of hospitality by the addition of one more state dinner for the season, which now includes four such state functions instead of three. Heretofore the White House schedule called for separate banquets in honor of the diplomatic corps, the supreme court and the cabinet, especially those congressmen being scattered in among the duties of honor, but attending no function at which themselves were honor guests.

MR. TAFT, however, decided that the legislative branch of the government deserved a state banquet of its own. So he inaugurated the Speaker's dinner, which this winter will be given in honor of a Democratic Champ Clark of Missouri, who, while seated at Taft's right hand during this formal repast, may be doing hungry eyes at the appointments of the man whom he hopes will shelter him a year and a day.

In the Speaker's dinner the leaders of the house representatives and their wives will be bidden, the cabinet members will be bidden to the cabinet dinner, which, by virtue of an ancient social anomaly, the president always has the first honor seat.

Another change in dinner customs affecting the president was inaugurated by Mr. Roosevelt, who during the first few years of his regime sat through the most formal dinners which the members of the cabinet in turn have annually given in honor of the president, but to which only their fellow-cabinet members and their wives were bidden. But during nine years with the same old crowd soon became known to Mr. Roosevelt, and he forthwith uttered an edict that each of his cabinet hosts should invite other cabinet members to meet him across the table and the wine. Thus was this series of cabinet dinners rescued from dullness. No one longs for a return to the old, monotonous programme.

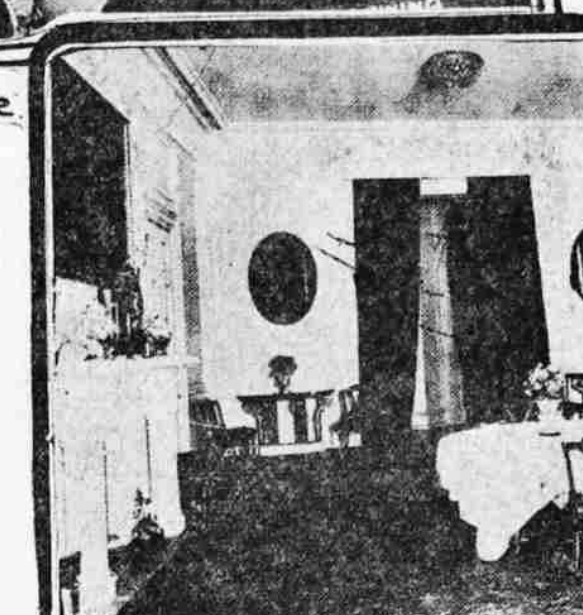
LEADERSHIP in Washington society hinges largely upon the genius with which the role of dinner host can be played, and the opportunities for gaining power in that role are greater than elsewhere in America, because of the vast number of foreign grand dignitaries here, each allowed a snug sum for entertainment. Washington hosts vie with one another in the honor of giving the most novel as well as the most sumptuous repasts, many of which represent in themselves a larger sum than the salary earned by a senator in a single year.

One of the most lavish dinner hosts of the present is the millionaire set has been Mr. Westinghouse, "the electric king." At one of his banquets, attended by most exalted members of officialdom, the dinner table was of purple velvet, all of the napkins were of the point lace and the shades of the golden candelons were artificial orchids. Following one of these magnificent repasts at his mansion, the Westinghouse held a cotillion, at which all of the women were dressed with Paris hats and the men with diamond crowns and silver-handled umbrellas.

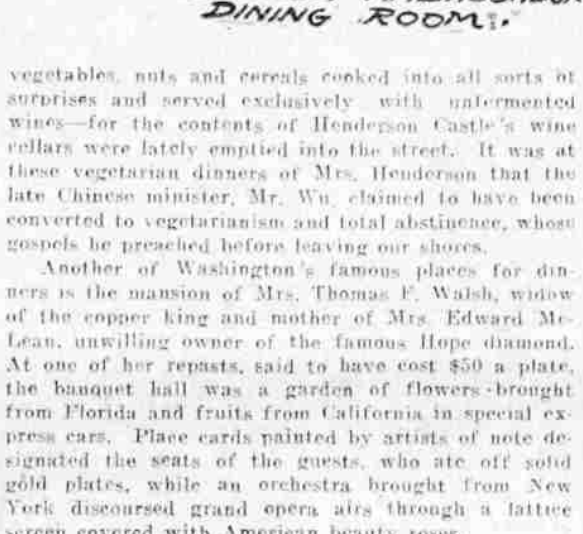
Another sumptuous dinner which will illustrate how the Washington dispensary of gastronomic delights was given in a recent season by Senator Warren of Arizona, now chairman of the senate committee of appropriations. More than a hundred guests sat down at a great table forming a hollow square about maps representing the Panama canal, in whose center floated models of our battleships. Along the sides of the canal were shown, in miniature, bronze and defense guns, brass caissons, each drawn by six men, and rows of muskets stacked for peace. The guest tropical foliage bordered the mirror-like water. The guest received either a corsage bouquet or boutonniere tied with ribbons of red, white and blue, which were represented upon the name cards and candles. A string orchestra played in a gallery overlooking the table and in the adjacent reception room hung, amid floral plants of every variety, the shield of the United States, formed of tiny electric lights.

Indeed, the capital's "professional diners out" of whom holiday hosts that they never have to dine during "the season"—enjoy a variety of luxuries not offered by any other great American city.

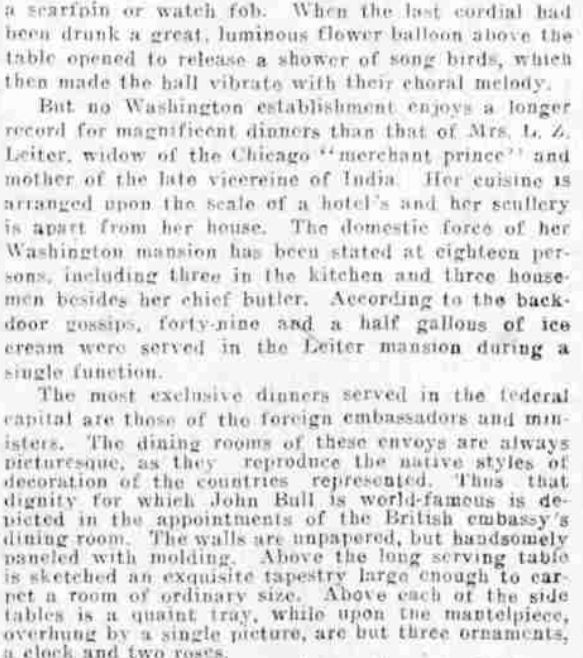
For example, there are the unique vegetarian dinners of Castle Henderson, whose chateau, the home of former Senator Henderson of Missouri, now all meats from her menus, both formal and private. The distinguished guests gathered about her appointed board—Washington's most exclusive dining room—sit down to five or six courses of



BRITISH AMBASSADOR'S DINING ROOM.



MRS. THOS. F. WALSH AND HER MANSION SCENE OF FAMOUS JEWEL DINNER.



CASTLE HENDERSON, WHERE VEGETARIAN BANQUETS ARE GIVEN.

vegetables, nuts and cereals cooked into all sorts of surprises and served exclusively with unfermented wines—for the contents of Henderson Castle's wine cellars were lately emptied into the street. It was at these vegetarian dinners of Mrs. Henderson that the late Chinese minister, Mr. Wu, claimed to have been converted to vegetarianism and total abstinence, whose gospels he preached before leaving our shores.

Another of Washington's famous places for dinners is the mansion of Mrs. Thomas F. Walsh, widow of the copper king and mother of Mrs. Edward McLean, unwilling owner of the famous Hope diamond. At one of her repasts, said to have cost \$50 a plate, the banquet hall was a garden of flowers brought from Florida and fruits from California in special express cars. Place cards painted by artists of note designated the seats of the guests, who ate off solid gold plates, while an orchestra brought from New York discoursed grand opera airs through a lattice screen covered with American beauty roses.

AT EACH plate was placed a jeweler's box containing a watch, a ring, a bracelet, a gold purse, a scarfpin or watch fob. When the last course had been drunk a great, luminous flower balloon above the table opened to release a shower of song birds, which then made the hall vibrate with their choral melody.

But no Washington establishment enjoys a longer record for magnificent dinners than that of Mrs. L. Z. Leiter, widow of the Chicago "merchant prince" and mother of the late vicereine of India. Her cuisine is arranged upon the scale of a hotel's and her scullery is apart from her house. The domestic forces of her Washington mansion has been stated at eighteen persons, including three in the kitchen and three housemaids besides her chief butler. According to the backdoor gossip, forty-nine and a half gallons of ice cream were served in the Leiter mansion during a single function.

The most exclusive dinners served in the federal capital are those of the foreign ambassadors and ministers. The dining rooms of these envoys are always picturesque, as they reproduce the native style of decoration of the countries represented. Thus that dignity for which John Bull is world-famous is depicted in the appointments of the British embassy's dining room. The walls are unpapered, but handsomely paneled with molding. Above the long serving table is sketched an exquisite tapestry large enough to carpet a room of ordinary size. Above each of the side tables is a quaint tray, while upon the mantelpiece, overlooking by a single picture, are but three ornaments, a clock and two roses.

The most picturesque embassy dinner in Washington's predilection was that given by the Countess Cassini, daughter of the former Russian ambassador. It preceded a costume ball, and each guest at the table wore a different style of headpiece of at least a century ago. The Countess herself appeared in that of Francesca da Rimini. Every era and country was represented, the men wearing all sorts of quaint effects, carrying from queues and periwigs to the wreaths and hands worn about the brows of classic Greeks and Romans.

THE dinners given by native officialdom are generally marked with greater modesty than those given by the millionaire civilians. During the state banquets at the White House the famous Marine band—in special uniforms worn only in the president's house—plays in the corridor outside the state dining room, and the table is decorated with the historic ornaments handed down from previous administrations or which have been gifts of foreign rulers. Thus the famous "Dolly Madison mirror," put together in sections, usually forms the centerpiece of the president's banquet board, while the guests eat from the thirty-thousand-dollar china service purchased during the regime of the Roosevelts, who had the state dining room enlarged to seat 100 instead of forty guests. Thus the Roosevelts doubled the expense of state dinners, whose viands must be purchased out of the president's privy purse. Mrs. Roosevelt added a touch to her dinner appointments such as had not been seen in the old mansion for many a decade. At one state dinner she had the new curved table decorated with crimson bouquets upon white plaques, while here and there were interspersed more than a dozen bisque statuettes presented by the president of France. President Roosevelt had the honor of dining one royal personage who is now a reigning monarch—the king of Siam—but the greatest of the Roosevelt dinners was that given in honor of Prince Henry of Prussia, the brother of the German emperor.

ABOUT the banquet board, spread upon the famous occasion in the great east room, hung a green canopy, against which glistered a wondrous display of red, white and blue lights. From garlands stretching

McKinley was a generous provider at these functions, and he did his best, but one luxury—lottery, the odor of which sickened him, and which he would not permit in the White House.

ONE of the famous dinner hosts of these times was Sir Julian Pauncefote, then British ambassador, who nearly every Sunday evening during social seasons invited the home and foreign officials to a sumptuous repast. He brought with him to Washington a German woman, who spoke also French and English, and who besides serving him as head cook, did his marketing. She and two other cooks made even the candy and ornamental table pieces used at his banquets, and his kitchen was equipped with every convenience known to the highest culinary art, including hundreds of moders for jellies, ices and custards.

A home official who vied with Sir Julian during the McKinley days was the millionaire, Representative Hitt of Illinois, whose son is now reported to be a rival of the Duke of the Abruzzi for the fair hand of Miss Katherine Elkins.

The Hitt dinners were served at many tables, arranged in the drawing room and hallway, as well as the dining room—about twenty, sometimes, each seating six guests and each provided with a separate waiter.

The Sunday night dinner in Washington was invented during the last Cleveland administration by the Secretary of State Mr. Olney, who, in the Bellamy Storer mansion, later leased—though never occupied—by Vice President Roosevelt, used to delight the official and millionaire set of that day with the choicest luxuries of Washington's unsurpassed markets. Until

like Representative Hitt, he seated his guests at small tables scattered all over the house.

One of the unique dinners of the second Cleveland regime was that given to the president by his secretary of agriculture, J. Sterling Morton, the scope of whose department was represented in the table decorations and viands, notably the ices, which in the form of garden vegetables, were served from a hay wagon made of spun sugar.

The dinner host par excellence during the Harrison regime was Vice President Levi P. Morton. To the mansion which he purchased on Scott Circle—and to which he will return, by the way, this winter—he added a magnificent new dining room at a cost of \$20,000. He brought to Washington a corps of about two dozen servants. During the most pretensions of his official dinners the Marine band, led by Sousa, played in the circular room at the bottom of the tower which forms one of the front corners of the mansion. It was published at the time that his establishment consumed, with other big items, fifty dozen eggs a week.

NO ONE ever disputed William C. Whitney's supremacy as a dinner host during the first Cleveland regime, when he was the secretary of the navy. His Menage was the most costly one maintained by an official, and it is said that he would spend as much as \$125 for the terrapin used at a single dinner. The premier of that same cabinet, Thomas F. Bayard, was another lover of the toothsome diamondback, which he used to prepare in the White House chafing dish for President Cleveland.

Of all the presidents, Arthur is said to have been

THE merriest dinner host who ever occupied the White House was Andrew Jackson, who at one of his state dinners astonished his guests by suddenly bursting into the old refrain, "Auld Lang Syne."

In spite of all that has been uttered about "Jeffersonian simplicity" it is a fact that the "father of Democracy" caused a considerable flutter by bringing a French chef to the White House. Of his generous hospitality it has been written:

"State dinners were served at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. At them was supplied ample port and madeira. At the state dinner in 1812 the dessert was ice creams, preserves, macaroons, fruits, nuts and nuts, when, it having reached candle-light time, the ladies left the table."

His steward is quoted as having said that "the day's provisions often cost as much as \$50." One of his desserts served at the White House was described by a congressman guest as "like apple pie, in the form of half a musk melon, the flat side down, top creased deep, the color a dark brown." Daniel Webster, who had dined with Jefferson many times, wrote of him: "He has a strong preference for the wines of the continent, which he has many sorts of excellent quality." Although the country's father dispensed hospitality on a generous scale, he exacted economy in detail. One day at dinner, when his steward set an exquisitely garnished shad before him, the first president asked the price.

"Three dollars," replied the steward.

"Take it away," said "Take it away!" exclaimed the general. "It shall never be said that my table sets such an example of luxury and extravagance."

And the crestfallen steward carried it out to be eaten by the servants.

NOTABLE WOMEN WERE FOND OF GAMBLING

A century or so ago there were hundreds of great ladies in England who made of their drawing rooms regular gambling dens, and in these drawing rooms of the world of fashion ladies in the most exalted social positions lost or won, as the case might be, tens of thousands of dollars in a single night's play. The royal princesses did not hesitate to play for the highest stakes and a faro bank was a part of the paraphernalia.

While the American women of today have more leisure than the women of more primitive times and conditions in this country and, therefore, turn more frequently for entertainment to games and cards, they do not indulge their love of cards to the same extent as did the sex in England in days when Lord Kenyon threatened that women convicted of gambling "should certainly exhibit themselves in the pillory though they should be first ladies in the land." However, American women are fond of cards and, deplorable, if you will, many of them play for money to an enormous extent.

Fashion varies as to the game in vogue. The once popular progressive euchre has been abolished and in its place we find the more technical game of bridge. Euchre is not an all-absorbing game. Memory and luck are the vital elements, and a vein of sociability may run on unrestrained, which may be considered its chief merit. But with bridge it is different.

Cards are supposed to be very similar to chess. They are of Indian origin and are sometimes called chess on paper. Chess represents an army, and this

army is represented in sculpture, while cards stand for the same in painting. Playing cards were known to the Arabians and Saracens from the beginning of the twelfth century. They were carried into Europe from India and China.

The queen in the card game does not hold the exalted position that she stands for in chess, where she is a general. It would seem that the game of chess might find popularity in the ranks of the suffragists, and that the card game would be abolished, since the queen of cards is necessarily meekly subordinate to her sovereign and master.

Queen Elizabeth was fond of cards, but inclined to be peevish and lose her temper in the game. Mary Queen of Scots carried her infatuation to the extent of wagering her personal attire on the game. She would play continuously from Saturday to Monday and sacrifice her wardrobe, if necessary, to do so. Queen Anne of Austria had persistent ill-luck, we are told, but "she played like a queen," without passion or greed. Anne Boleyn was an inveterate gambler, as were all the wives of Henry VIII, with one exception. Catherine of Aragon did not gamble. She had no love for the card table. Nell Gwynne lost \$200 one night to the niece of the notorious gambler, Mazarin, who afterward died insolvent, having lost at cards an enormous fortune left to her by her cardinal uncle.

Oliver Goldsmith relates a story of a woman who insisted on playing a game of cribbage with the minister who had come to soothe her dying hours. The

clergyman lost every penny he had with him and he was just dealing the cards for another game, her spiritual adviser's stake being her own funeral expenses, when she died, leaving the game unwon.

At the French court the cardrooms from the time of Charles VI to that of Louis XVI. were luxuriously furnished. The counters used were mother of pearl or some other valuable substance. The cards were embroidered with silver on white satin, and some were the work of the most famous miniature painters.

A story is told of the famous dowager, electress of Saxony, who was very fond of the card table and who was not above taking advantage of her passion when opportunity offered. One evening she "committed some irregularity" (as cheating is termed when done by a person of high rank). Suspicious of her honesty were excited by her play. A courtier who noticed this said: "Pardon, madame, my suspicions could not fall on you. Sovereigns cheat only for crowns."

The descendants of Lady Catherine Alexander, daughter of Maj. Gen. Lord Sterling and wife of Col. William Duer, tell the following anecdote: "The dame was fond of whist and it is probable that cards were not as common nor as cheap as they are now, so women carried their own packs with them to card parties. One morning while attending services in St. Paul's church, New York, her ladyship pulled her handkerchief out of her spacious pocket, and with it drew out a pack of cards, which, to the amusement of the congregation and her own consternation, scattered about the pew."